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course, quite impossible. But if "W. H." had sided against Essex and was released upon his overthrow, we should have a situation with which everything in this most puzzling sonnet would accord.

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## MANKIND AND THE MUMMING PLAYS

Lines 426-468 of the Macro Morality play *Mankind* have some points that suggest a connection with the modern mumming play, or, more accurately, with its medieval prototype.

1. In ll. 425-440 Myscheff offers to cure Now-a-days of his wound by smiting off his head and setting it on again as good as new. This heroic remedy is similar to the mock cures in the modern mumming plays. For instance, in the first part of the St. George play performed at Bampton, in Oxfordshire, the Doctor, who is summoned to cure the "Turkish Knight," enumerates the wonders that he can perform, one of them being to cure a magpie of the toothache by cutting off his head.<sup>1</sup> In the second part of the same play, the Doctor, called in to cure the "Soldier Bold of Prussia," says,

Yes, there's a doctor in the land,  
Capable of head and hand;  
And if this man has got a cough,  
I'll cure him without cutting his head off.  
And if this man has lost his head,  
I'll put a donkey's on instead.<sup>2</sup>

Two other plays, one of Islip, Oxfordshire, and the other of Berkshire, give the same cure for the magpie's toothache.<sup>3</sup> In a Worcestershire play, "Turkish Knight" is revived by the Doctor, who boasts, "If I break that man's neck, I'll put it in place, and not charge a farthing for my pains."<sup>4</sup>

In none of the extant plays is the cure of the dead or wounded knight represented as being effected by beheading; the remedy is

<sup>1</sup> P. H. Ditchfield, *Old English Customs*, p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 325.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 318 and 313.

<sup>4</sup> *Notes and Queries*, 2nd Ser., XI, 271.

usually a pill or a stamp of the foot. The versions which have been cited, however, contain references to the cure of a magpie and a wounded man by cutting off their heads, and in one there is a significant suggestion of setting on a donkey's head if the man has lost his. What is the source of this incident? Mr. Chambers has shown that the scene of the Doctor and his cures is archaic: it is the survival of the primitive ceremony symbolizing "the *renouveau*, the annual death of the year or the fertilization spirit and its annual resurrection in spring."<sup>5</sup> The modern plays retain only vague memories of this ceremony. In none of them is the knight killed by beheading,—his death is usually the result of a fight; but in some of the sword dances, which Mr. Chambers shows to be closely related to the mumming plays,<sup>6</sup> there are significant figures which seem to be reminiscent of the actual beheading of a primitive sacrificial victim.<sup>7</sup> If we take this primitive ceremony and the incomplete modern version, with its suggestion of beheading and replacing the head, as the two extremes of the process of evolution, we should expect to get somewhere an intermediate form in which the knight—who took the place of the sacrificial victim when the original significance of the ceremony was forgotten—was represented as being beheaded and then revived by setting on his head. Later, the idea of a cure seems to have become associated with the beheading itself, perhaps through the influence of the common stories of disenchantment by decapitation.<sup>8</sup> Such a hypothetical form would account for the scene in the modern play.

Compare this hypothetical form with the passage in *Mankind*. There Myscheff offers to cure the wounded Now-a-days by cutting off his head, and setting it on again as good as new. Was this incident suggested by a medieval prototype of the modern mumming play, a prototype having the form outlined above?

2. The theory that this was the case is strengthened by other evidence. One of the most interesting features in *Mankind* is the collection (ll. 448-467). In no other extant medieval play, so far as I know, is the collection made a part of the play as it is here.

<sup>5</sup> E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, I, 218.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 218.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 203 and 206.

<sup>8</sup> For a number of these stories see G. L. Kittredge, "Disenchantment by Decapitation" (*Journal of American Folk-Lore*, XVIII, 1-14).

This is very much like the *quête*, which always has a prominent place in the mumming plays.<sup>9</sup>

3. In ll. 445 ff., Nought, with his flute, summons Tityvillus, who is outside, and who answers, "I com with my leggis vndur me." During the collection New-gyse and Now-a-days prepare for the coming of Tityvillus by saying that they are gathering money for "a man with a hede þat is of grett omnipotens" (l. 454); "he ys a worschypfull man" (l. 456); and "he ys a goodly man, sers: make space, & be ware" (l. 467). Then Tityvillus enters, announcing, "Ego sum dominancium dominus, & my name ys Titivillus" (l. 468). This announcing of Tityvillus and his answers, suggest the presentation of the characters in the mumming plays and sword dances, where the Chorus, or some other character, calls for the players in turn, and they enter, repeating the formula, "In comes I, Beelzebub," etc.; "Here come I," etc.; or "I am the Turkish Champion," etc.<sup>10</sup>

4. In l. 454, New-gyse describes Tityvillus as a "man with a hede þat is of grett omnipotens." In several of the mumming plays "Beelzebub uses the description 'big head and little wit' to announce himself on his arrival."<sup>11</sup> He is not actually represented as having a larger head than ordinary; nor is he usually the devil in the play,—that part is generally taken by some character like Little Devil Doubt.<sup>12</sup> His name, however, suggests that his lineage is to be traced back to some devil in an earlier form of the mumming play; and the description appears to be a survival of the distinguishing feature of that ancestor, a head of unusual size, which was probably represented by a large mask of some sort. It was just such a devil in the medieval prototype of the modern plays that, according to our theory of relationship, would have furnished the suggestion for Tityvillus in *Mankind*, with his "hede þat is of grett omnipotens."

It is to be noted, also, that "Beelzebub generally carries a club and a ladle or frying pan, with which he makes the *quête*."<sup>13</sup> Tityvillus, although he does not make the collection, is closely associated with it.

<sup>9</sup> Chambers, I, 217.

<sup>10</sup> T. F. Ordish, "English Folk-Drama," in *Folk-Lore*, IV, 160-161; see also Chambers, I, 209, note 3; 215, 216; and II, 277.

<sup>11</sup> Chambers, I, 214.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 215.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 214, note 1.

5. Finally, when Tityvillus enters, accompanied by Nought (who apparently has been waiting outside with him), Now-a-days bids the spectators "Make space, & be ware" (l. 467). Frequently, the mumming play begins with the entrance of a character bearing a broom, with which he pretends to sweep, at the same time calling upon the spectators to make room for the players.<sup>14</sup> I do not care to make too much of this point, however, for expressions similar to the one in l. 467 are used elsewhere in *Mankind* to clear a way for the entrance of the players through the audience (see ll. 605, 624, etc.).

We have, then, in *Mankind* four, and perhaps five, elements which are found in the modern mumming plays; and, it is to be particularly noted, they are all in one passage of less than fifty lines. A summary of the evidence will make the relationship clearer. Mr. Chambers divides the typical mumming play into three parts: the Presentation, the Drama proper and the *Quête*.<sup>15</sup> In the first, the characters are presented, and introduce themselves with certain formulas; in the second, one of the main incidents is the reviving of a killed or wounded character by the Doctor, who in some versions speaks of a cure by beheading; in the third, the collection is taken. In *Mankind* we have the presentation of Tityvillus, and his use of similar formulas in announcing himself to the audience; we have beheading proposed as a cure by Myscheff, the "Doctor;" and we have the collection. In addition, a big head is associated with both Beelzebub and Tityvillus, the latter a devil, and the former, if we are to judge by the name, the descendant of a "devil" ancestor. Finally, there is a demand for space or room in both plays. This parallelism between the two can hardly be accidental; it points to a definite relationship.

The natural explanation of this relationship is that the writer of *Mankind* drew his incidents from a fifteenth century prototype of the modern mumming play. Mr. Chambers says that the archetype of the modern texts need not be earlier than the seventeenth century.<sup>16</sup> There is no evidence, however, to show that it was not earlier. In fact, Mr. Ordish thinks that the combat between the Winter and Summer Champions—of which the modern Doctor's episode is a survival—was amalgamated with the St. George story about the time of the Crusades; and he adds: "When the dialogue

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 216.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 211.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 221.

was added we do not know; there were probably spoken words of defiance by the champions [St. George, Mohammedan warriors, etc.] in thirteenth-century English, and on this modifications and developments were made, until the play reached the shape in which we know it in more or less debased forms.”<sup>17</sup> We have seen that somewhere in the evolution from the actual primitive sacrifice to the modern episode of the Doctor we should expect a form which could suggest the proposed cure in *Mankind*. According to our theory this form belongs to the fifteenth century, and it contained an episode in which a cure of a dead or wounded man was represented as being effected by beheading. The passage in *Mankind* does not give any data for determining the nature of the combat which preceded the cure, or the nature of the dialogue, with the exception of the presentation formulas; but it does give enough on other points to lead us to suppose that the fifteenth century prototype contained the chief features of the modern play. Thus, if the relationship has been established, we have some new information about the mumming plays which antedates our previous knowledge of them by about two centuries.

My contention is not that the author of *Mankind* was consciously trying to write a little play of fifty lines, within the larger play, in imitation of this medieval prototype, but that he adapted some of the material to his needs. The theory of this sort of relationship is entirely probable. *Mankind* was written for a country audience and by a man who was familiar with country life and customs. The mumming play, also, belongs to the “folk;” it is distinctly the property of the country-side. Hence, this hypothetical prototype is the sort of play with which the author of *Mankind* and his audience would be likely to be familiar, and it is not strange that he should be influenced by it.

WALTER K. SMART.

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<sup>17</sup> *Folk-Lore*, IV, 160.